

National Service Impact in Alabama



State Commission

Serve Alabama, The Governor's Office of Faith-Based and Volunteer Service, oversees seven AmeriCorps State programs with more than 150 members, providing services in all 67 Alabama counties. For the 2014-2015 program year, Alabama AmeriCorps State programs met critical needs in the areas of education, economic opportunity, healthy futures, and capacity building. During that year AmeriCorps State programs recruited and managed more than 4,500 volunteers who gave 48,000 hours of service; delivered housing placement services to more than 1,900 economically disadvantaged individuals; and tutored or taught more than 15,000 children by way of one-on-one and group facilitation to support education programs or provided classroom instruction in kindergarten through 12th grade public schools. Additionally, Serve Alabama operates as the state's lead agency for volunteer and donations management after disasters and serves as the State Voluntary Agency Liaison to volunteer and nonprofit groups serving in disaster recovery efforts. The office provides annual training in volunteer, donation, and volunteer reception center management in addition to response duties. Serve Alabama has lead two FEMA disaster case management grant projects (2011 and 2014) totaling more than \$7 million in case management resources for disaster recovery for families and individuals, leading to the use of more than \$17 million in recovery assets for these families. Serve Alabama also administers the Alabama Governor's Emergency Relief Fund, providing more than \$6 million dollars in disaster recovery funds for Alabamians since 2011. Serve Alabama also supports disaster preparedness by managing the state's Ready Alabama disaster preparedness campaign.

AmeriCorps State

Impact Alabama was founded in 2004 as the state's first nonprofit dedicated to developing substantive service-learning and leadership development projects for college students and recent college graduates. The Impact Alabama AmeriCorps program is based out of Birmingham. AmeriCorps members are trained to conduct vision screenings for low-income and underserved youth, primarily Pre-K. If a vision problem is detected, they are referred for treatment at no cost. Families are also connected to support services for through Sight Savers who can provide longer term support for kids with vision problems. In 2014-2015, Impact Alabama held 1,257 screening sessions in all 67 counties. A total of 38,023 preschoolers were screened, and 3,935 were found to have vision problems and were referred for help.

AmeriCorps VISTA

The Theo Ratliff Activity Center currently hosts seven AmeriCorps VISTA members serving in STEM education and volunteer recruitment. The biggest challenge for the Ratliff Center VISTA program was recruiting and maintaining volunteers. After making extensive phone calls and visiting various businesses in the community, the center has begun to receive a large number of volunteers. The Ratliff Center has partnered with the Alabama Department of Human Resources and the City of Demopolis Housing Authority. They are now referring volunteers that must complete a certain number of volunteer hours to continue to receive services from the agencies. These volunteers are screened, and if chosen, they receive a background check and extensive training. The VISTAs have been responsible for creating volunteer outreach material, training, and volunteer assignment matching. They have recruited fifty-two new volunteers and leveraged more than \$150,000 in resources.

In FY2015, six AmeriCorps VISTAs at REV Birmingham's Urban Food Project worked to improve access to fresh produce in communities labeled as food deserts. They developed relationships with local farmers and assisted in fund development. VISTAs established a relationship with ten outlets including corner stores, gas stations, and neighborhood drug stores; developed a marketing campaign; and collaborated with staff to leverage cash investments of more than \$300,000. Additionally, VISTAs assisted vendors, provided instruction, and trained them how to order fresh produce. After the sites were established, VISTAs recruited local chefs and high school culinary students to conduct cooking demonstrations for residents. Several of the vendors that participated in the program replaced the candy on their counters with fresh fruit. In addition to building relationships with vendors, VISTAs assisted REV Birmingham leverage corporate donations to support the agency's business development objectives.

AmeriCorps NCCC

The community of Tuscaloosa is still recovering from the effects of the April 27, 2011 tornado. An AmeriCorps NCCC team was able to support Habitat for Humanity of Tuscaloosa (HFHT) in their continued long-term recovery efforts. The mission of HFHT is to provide housing solutions for low and moderate income families. Since Tuscaloosa was declared a Federal Disaster Area, the team has helped the community move forward in its recovery by remodeling four homes. NCCC members installed flooring, trim, baseboards, awnings, and exterior siding. They also painted interior walls, doors, and a porch. Their service provided the community with a sense of hope for the future.

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In partnership with The John McClure Snook Youth Club of Foley, an AmeriCorps NCCC team served as camp counselors and assisted with field trips and camp experiences focused on STEM and classes in language arts, creative writing, and visual and performing arts for low-income campers. The Snook Youth Club's mission is to provide youth participants with the opportunity to engage in programs that promote social, emotional, intellectual, academic, artistic and athletic growth, healthy lifestyles and civic responsibility. The team acted as positive adult role models and supported the camp teachers in developing and delivering academic lessons. Some AmeriCorps NCCC members engaged in community asset mapping, canvassing 200 businesses. The information they gathered was shared with community members.

Senior Corps Foster Grandparent Program

Twelve schools in Mobile County were rated as failing by the state Department of Education. Foster Grandparents are serving in five of these. The Mobile County Foster Grandparent program and its 80 volunteers have logged 62,650 volunteer hours in the last nine months, working with more than 490 children. At the beginning of the school year one four-year-old student was very shy and at risk. He had never attended school before and had very little experience outside of his family structure. He seldom spoke and his attention span was very short. He was assigned to a Foster Grandparent known as Granny Johnson. The caring one-on-one attention she provides has helped this student grow and thrive. He was recently named Most Improved Student, and is excelling academically and socially.

Senior Corps RSVP

According to the Project Literacy United States (PLUS) program at Shelton State Community College, at least 23 percent of Tuscaloosa County and 41 percent of Hale County residents are illiterate. The West Alabama Literacy Council states, "Forty-three percent of the people with the lowest literacy skills live in poverty; 17 percent receive food stamps, and 70 percent have no job or a part-time job." Twenty FOCUS RSVP volunteers have provided 700 hours as adult literacy tutors at Shelton State Community College. In addition to adult literacy classes, RSVP volunteers assist with English as a Second Language. From September through May, classes of 25 students from Mexico, Guatemala, Brazil, China, Japan, Vietnam, Russia, France, Iran, and Iraq are tutored by RSVP volunteers in writing and reading skills. Seventy percent have shown improvement in reading and writing skills. Overall the program engages 180 volunteers, 30 of whom are veterans serving in disaster services, healthy futures, and economic opportunity focus areas.

Senior Corps Senior Companion Program

Senior Companion Program volunteers sponsored by Positive Maturity provided 73,958 hours of service, valued at more than \$1.5 million. They served 214 clients in FY 2015 in partnership with the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services, the Alabama Respite Coalition, the Jefferson County Housing Authority, and the Veterans Administration Hospital. Based on the information provided in Genworth's 2014 annual cost of care survey, having a Senior Companion saved families a total of \$1,183,328. Many families served by Senior Companions indicated that the respite care provided by Senior Companion volunteers was essential in helping them keep their loved ones at home. In total, 96 of the 99 Alabama Senior Companion volunteers worked with clients who remained in private homes.

Social Innovation Fund

The Social Innovation Fund is investing \$303,861 to expanding the impact of four Alabama nonprofits focused on improving health outcomes of individuals living with HIV/AIDS. A preliminary analysis suggests that individuals enrolled in the intervention have better outcomes in linkage to care, retention in care, and adherence to antiretroviral medication versus those in the control group.